



STATE SENATOR **BRUCE PATTERSON** IN THE LOOP ★

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09/13/05

Protecting property rights

The rights of Michigan's private property owners will be more secure and clearly defined thanks to legislation targeted for quick action this week. Following a U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Kelo v. City of New London* case, which allows the seizure of private property for private economic development projects, the Senate has put together a plan to help protect the rights of Michigan's private property owners. Senate Joint Resolution E, a constitutional amendment dubbed "MI Home," has been introduced to strengthen Michigan's Constitution by defining what constitutes public use and clearly stating that land cannot be taken away for private economic purposes. Senate Bill 693 strengthens Michigan's existing eminent domain statute and clarifies that private business economic development could not fall under this "public use" definition. The proposed legislation is before the Senate Committee on Transportation. If approved, the amendment is slated to be on the ballot for the 2006 election, while SB 693 is expected to be brought before the full Senate later this fall.

Senator Patterson's Bill extends Electric Rate limits (SB 755)

Michigan families have seen energy costs skyrocket lately, not alone due to Hurricane Katrina. Forecasts predict other increases in home heating fuel, etc, whose effects will be felt sharply this winter. On January 1, 2006, limits on electric rates currently in place will expire. This week, Senator Patterson introduced legislation to extend those rate caps, to protect family budgets in that regard. "Electric rates are still subject to legislative control, unlike so many other energy commodities," said Sen. Patterson. He has 18 co-sponsors, both Democrat and Republican: 19 votes. It takes 20 to pass the Senate... One to go!

Katrina Relief

Michigan Guardsmen, utility linemen, medical professionals, and many others have gone to the Gulf Coast to help our fellow citizens in this time of dire need. If you would like to help, see <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/patterson/> and click by the Red Cross symbol.

Downriver Resolutions call for End of MDOT crossing study

Two Resolutions introduced by Sen. Patterson oppose the continued study of Downriver sites for a crossing to Canada. Senate Concurrent Resolution #27 can be seen by following the link on Sen. Patterson's Webpage. [Senate Res. #57 is identical in content but follows a different legal route.] The Resolutions were referred to Sen. Patterson's own Committee on Technology & Energy, and he promises hearings in the Downriver area where he will be in charge.

"Model letters", promised in a recent letter from Sen. Patterson to Grosse Île residents, will now be found by a link on the Webpage. They can be addressed to other decision makers, too. Studies already concluded show that the soils in the Downriver Corridor are unsuitable for tunnel or bridge construction. Disturbing industrial sediments known to be silted over in Black Lagoon beside the old McLouth Steel site will undo years of environmental clean-up and create toxic havoc to a recovering ecosystem. The width of the corridor is seven times greater than at the narrows, so seven times more steel, concrete, etc., would be required, even before the approaches are considered --- through an international wildlife sanctuary! MDOT's own standards say the Downriver sites should be taken out of all further consideration. Why the continued waste of taxpayer money when the state's budget is so tight already?

Senate Republicans limit children's access to violent video games

Parents will receive more help in keeping their children from being exposed to extremely violent and sexually explicit video games under legislation approved by the Senate and sent to the governor. The legislation will make it a crime to sell ultra-violent or sexually explicit games to children.

This year, undercover investigations conducted by county sheriffs found that children as young as nine years old were able to purchase video games rated for adults-only at many of the stores investigated. Violent video games have been linked to violent or criminal behavior in young people. Many studies have shown that violent or aggressive behavior can be caused by playing games that graphically depict violence. In one case in Ingham County last year, two boys caused a crash that killed a father and his young son. The boys had been driving recklessly and were trying to imitate the violent game *Grand Theft Auto*, in which players kill pedestrians and other drivers.

Senate votes to keep sexual predators out of the classroom

Sex offenders would be stopped from working in schools under legislation, called the Student Safety Initiative; it passed the Michigan Senate recently. It is a bicameral effort that comes on the heels of a series of reports in the *Detroit News* showing repeated cases of sex offenders being allowed access to children in Michigan schools. At least 35 Michigan school employees, a majority of whom are teachers, have been charged or convicted of sexual misconduct in recent months, according to recent news reports.

The Student Safety Initiative includes:

- Requiring background checks on all paid school and day-care center employees and prohibiting anyone with a sex offense from being employed;
- Creating Student Safety Zones by prohibiting convicted sex offenders from living, working or loitering within 1,000 feet of a school;
- Revoking teaching certification for convicted sex offenders; and

- Requiring all school employees to self-report any criminal charge to their school district and to the Department of Education.

Standing Room Only Crowds pack local Senate Hearings

On August 25, in Grosse Île, over 800 jammed the High School Auditorium for a Transportation Committee hearing on the Downriver Crossing proposals. MDOT's Director, Gloria Jeff, and Mohammed Alghurabi, Senior Project Director, spoke, as did Sen. Patterson, and a number of local residents.

On the Webpage, you can view video footage of Sen. Patterson's statement to the Transportation Committee on August 25 at the Grosse Île meeting.

On September 6, in Northville, another packed room gave local citizens opportunity to speak on water quality and related issues before the Senate's Natural Resources & Environmental Affairs Committee. Sen. Patterson had requested this local meeting back in May. Expect more local meetings in the future for your information and participation.

'Internet Hunting' to be banned activity in Michigan

Sen. Patterson's bill to ban the use of a computer to 'hunt' wild game in an enclosed space at the click of a mouse has passed the Senate and the House, and is headed for the Governor's desk. The click might have controlled a rifle, a cross-bow, or any other weapon. "This is not hunting," said Patterson, himself an avid hunter. "Michigan hunters take our sport seriously," said Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton, sponsor of Senate Bill 620. "Activities like this are a disgrace to those of us who proudly call ourselves sportsmen." The law will apply whether the animal is located in Michigan, or not.

Star-Spangled Banner

The night of September 13-14, 1814, saw the intense British bombardment of Baltimore's Fort McHenry. Francis Scott Key watched it while aboard a British ship, where he had gone to negotiate prisoner releases. By the dawn's early light, on September 14, he could still see the Stars and Stripes over the Fort, and was inspired to write what became our National Anthem. Did you know it has another verse, so that it does not end as a question?

Poetry can inspire a nation! Poetry can inspire children! A State Poet Laureate can foster these goals.

Support Senator Patterson's SB 181 to establish a Michigan Poet Laureate. Write a letter to a newspaper or magazine. If you would like help in this, contact Sen. Patterson's office.

Contact Information

Thank you for your interest in our current state issues. If you would like to receive future updates via e-mail, please contact my office at < senbpatterson@senate.michigan.gov >. You can also visit me in my Lansing office at 505 Farnum Building, just across S. Capitol Avenue from the state Capitol; or you can send me mail at P. O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909. Telephone (517) 373-7350 or (866) 262-7307; fax (517) 373-9228. I want to hear from you.

See the *Legislative Questionnaire* on the Website, too! Your responses are welcomed!